
Course Guide: **“Special Drivers for Special Children”**

Course overview

This curriculum provides lesson plans and instructional materials to help trainers conduct an effective 6-hour course for bus drivers transporting children with disabilities. The goal of the course is to help these “special drivers for special children” provide a safe ride to and from school and school activities for children with disabilities.

The curriculum addresses eight key topics:

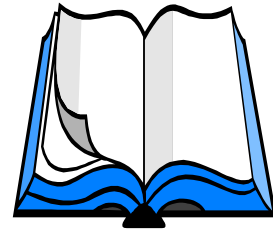
1. The challenge of transporting children with disabilities
2. Characteristics of children with disabilities and implications for their bus ride
3. Legal aspects of transporting children with disabilities
4. Communication is critical for special needs bus drivers
5. Behavior management strategies for children with disabilities
6. Safe loading and transportation of children using adaptive equipment
7. Special preparation for emergencies
8. Unique responsibilities of drivers of children with disabilities

This course was created by the Pupil Transportation Safety Institute for the Virginia Department of Education. It builds on the 1991 “Transporting Students with Special Needs” course.

Using the "Special Drivers for Special Children" Manual

The Manual is divided into 5 sections:

1. **Course Guide** (present document): provides a general overview to prepare trainers to teach the course. Course Guide addresses the following topics:
 - Course Overview (previous page)
 - Overall Course Goals
 - Course Objectives
 - Suggested Agenda
 - Tailoring the Curriculum to your own Operation
 - Using Lesson Plans
 - Using Overhead Transparencies
 - Using the Driver Workbook
 - Discussion Formats
 - Using Activity Guides
 - Unique Aspects of Special Needs Driver Training
 - Facility considerations
 - Resources and References
2. **Lesson Plans** for the 8 units of the course. See "Using Lesson Plans" below.
3. **Activity Guides** – detailed outlines for suggested group activities.
4. **Overhead Transparencies** for the 8 units of the course. See "Using Course Overheads" below.
5. **Driver Workbook**. Drivers in the course should be provided with their own copy of the Driver Workbook. The Workbook includes summaries of key contents, review questions, and exercises corresponding to the 8 units of the course. See "Using the Driver Workbook" below.

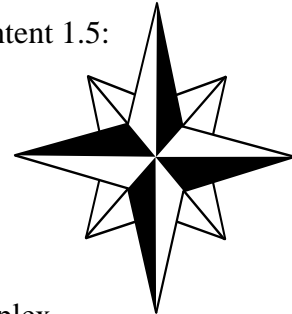


Overall course goals

Underlying the specific course objectives outlined above are 4 basic goals:

1. **Awareness.** A greater awareness of the problems children with disabilities face is a key goal of this course.
2. **Current information.** Special needs transportation is constantly evolving, and both new and experienced school bus drivers need to learn up-to-date safety procedures. Providing current special needs safety information is an important goal of the course.
3. **Confidence.** Driving children with disabilities is a big responsibility. Drivers may feel intimidated by the topics covered in this course. Knowledge increases skills. A key goal of the course is to provide drivers with the resources, information, skills, and awareness to confidently meet the challenges they'll face.
4. **Asking for help.** Because special needs transportation is so complex and ever changing, and because children's safety is at stake, a basic goal of this course is convincing drivers of the importance of asking for help when faced with unfamiliar situations. No matter how comprehensive the curriculum and how knowledgeable the trainer, no course can teach everything about special needs transportation safety.

Overall course goals are discussed with drivers in Unit 1 (Core Content 1.5: "Course overview").



Course objectives

Anyone involved in special needs transportation realizes it's a complex and constantly evolving topic. Training programs for drivers of children with disabilities inevitably cover a lot of ground.

Effective trainers encourage active participation and find ways to "draw out" drivers' questions and concerns during class. Lively, back-and-forth interactions with drivers are inherently unpredictable but seasoned trainers know the unexpected discussions that "go off on a tangent" can accomplish a great deal.

But training must be more than lively discussions. For training to "take," to meet the underlying needs of the drivers in the long term, an instructor must be able to maintain instructional focus. Defining specific learning objectives is key.

This course curriculum defines basic learning objectives for each instructional unit. The objectives are not intended to tie a trainer's hands or "put a damper on" discussion, but to help the trainer focus on the most important goals for each session.

Defining learning objectives. Learning objectives can be thought of as what the trainer wants the student to be able to do after the instruction is over. To be truly helpful to a trainer, defined objectives should be specific, tangible, measurable, and attainable.

Using objectives to evaluate the training. Well-defined objectives also allow a trainer to evaluate the extent to which his or her students actually grasped the key concepts being taught. This curriculum is organized so each unit's objectives serve as the basis for review questions, allowing trainers to assess the effectiveness of training sessions - in effect, "completing the instructional circle." If objectives were not attained by all drivers in the class, trainers may need to return to a particular topic. A willingness to "monitor and adjust" instruction is the sign of an effective teacher.

Final Review. Similarly, the Final Review at the end of the course is drawn from each unit's objectives, and provides a final opportunity to reinforce and clarify key topics. The 60 final review questions are included in a separate section immediately following the 8 lesson plans.

Key objectives for each unit

Unit One: The challenge of transporting children with disabilities.

By the conclusion of this unit, drivers will be able to:

1. Describe our society's progress in educating children with disabilities.
2. Explain the pivotal role of the school bus in providing access to special education services.
3. Identify new challenges facing schools in educating children with disabilities.
4. Explain course guidelines.
5. Describe course goals.

Unit Two: Characteristics of children with disabilities.

By the conclusion of this unit, drivers will be able to:

1. Explain the importance of treating each disabled child as an individual.
2. Describe the basic characteristics of each disability.
3. Identify special challenges presented by each type of disability during the bus ride.

4. Describe at least one strategy to safely transport each category of disability.

Unit Three: Legal aspects of transporting children with disabilities.

By the conclusion of this unit, drivers will be able to:

1. Identify key special education laws and describe their importance.
2. Define the acronyms IEP, FAPE, and LRE and explain their importance in providing an education to children with disabilities.
3. Describe three ways drivers can protect themselves and their employers from potential liability when transporting children with disabilities.

Unit Four: Communication is critical for special needs bus drivers.

By the conclusion of this unit, drivers will be able to:

1. Identify key characteristics of professionalism and explain its importance in improving communication.
2. Define confidentiality and explain its importance.
3. Use appropriate language when speaking with or about children with disabilities.
4. Identify at least one tip for communicating effectively with school staff, parents, and bus aides.
5. Explain the importance of asking questions and reporting problems when transporting children with disabilities.

Unit Five: Behavior management strategies for children with disabilities.

By the conclusion of this unit, drivers will be able to:

1. Explain why disciplinary consequences for children with disabilities are determined on an individual basis.
2. Describe five key elements for successful behavior management.
3. Explain at least three ways drivers can help break a conflict spiral with students.
4. Explain how to defuse a potential fight and what to do if a fight breaks out on the bus.
5. Use referrals properly.

Unit Six: Safe loading and transportation of children using adaptive equipment.

By the conclusion of this unit, drivers will be able to:

1. Explain why loading and transportation of children in wheelchairs and other adaptive equipment requires attention to detail, patience, caring, and the willingness to ask questions.
2. Use the lift to load and unload wheelchairs following proper safety procedures.
3. Secure a wheelchair in a bus following proper safety procedures.
4. Secure a safety seat onto a bus seat following proper safety procedures.
5. Define the term “TLC (Tender Loving Care) driving” and explain its importance when transporting children in wheelchairs.

Unit Seven: Special preparation for emergencies.

By the conclusion of this unit, drivers will be able to:

1. Explain why fires pose a serious threat for bus drivers transporting children with disabilities.
2. Describe a bus driver’s responsibilities after a crash.
3. Create a written evacuation plan.
4. Explain what a “best exit” is in an emergency evacuation.
5. Demonstrate how to cut a seat belt.
6. Demonstrate how to safely move a heavy child to an exit.

Unit Eight: Unique responsibilities of drivers of special children.

By the conclusion of this unit, drivers will be able to:

1. Describe the unique physical demands that can be placed on drivers transporting children in wheelchairs and safety seats.
2. Describe appropriate dress and hygiene standards when working around children with disabilities.
3. Describe the unique emotional demands and benefits of working with children with disabilities.

Suggested agenda

The course consists of 8 units of varying length, with a recommended total of 6 hours of instructional time. The table below describes suggested times and teaching locations for each unit.

Unit	Teaching location	Suggested time
Unit 1 The challenge of transporting children with disabilities.	Classroom	30 min.
Unit 2 Characteristics of children with disabilities.	Classroom	60 min.
Unit 3 Legal aspects of transporting children with disabilities.	Classroom	30 min.
Unit 4 Communication is critical for special needs bus drivers.	Classroom	30 min.
Unit 5 Behavior management strategies for children with disabilities.	Classroom	60 min.
Unit 6 Safe loading and transportation of children using adaptive equipment.	Bus, classroom	60 min.
Unit 7 Special preparation for emergencies.	Bus, classroom	60 min.
Unit 8 Unique responsibilities of drivers of children with disabilities.	Classroom	30 min.

Tailoring the course to your own operation

In many ways each school district and each transportation operation is unique.

As much as possible, this course is designed to be tailored to the specific training needs of your own drivers. Depending on local conditions, certain units of the course, or specific activities within individual units, will be more important than others. Exposing drivers to the whole gamut of special needs transportation is important, but it only makes sense for trainers to emphasize the most relevant topics for their own situation.

Assessing your operation's training needs

Several factors need to be taken into account when planning a course. Course planning must be based on assessing the operation's specific training needs. Answering the following questions will assist trainers in tailoring the course to their own drivers' needs.

Student population

1. What types of children with disabilities does your operation presently transport?
2. Have new children with unfamiliar conditions and needs recently moved into the district?
3. Are specific special needs populations expanding in your district?

Previous training

1. To what extent have your drivers already been trained in special needs transportation?
2. Which topics have been adequately covered, and which not?
3. How long has it been since training took place? Have safety procedures changed since then?
4. What training have bus aides received?
5. Have senior drivers had access to up-to-date information about special needs transportation? What skills and input could veteran drivers provide to the course?

Driver turnover

1. How stable is your roster of bus drivers?

2. Have new drivers who still lack adequate special needs training entered the ranks recently?

Vehicles and equipment

1. Have new special needs buses or equipment (i.e., securement systems, lifts, etc.) recently come into your fleet?
2. Have all drivers been adequately in-serviced in newer special needs buses and equipment?
3. Have medically fragile children utilizing life support or other medical technology entered your school system?

Incidents or accidents

1. Have there been recent incidents or accidents involving special needs buses in your operation?
2. Can you identify “training gaps” that contributed to these accidents or incidents?
3. Have problems relating to driver – monitor teamwork arisen in the operation?

Training records

Maintaining accurate training records is very important for school districts. Training files should include at least the following:

- Who attended
- Who provided training
- Identification of curriculum used
- Copies of handouts
- Copies of review tests, if any



Surveying drivers

When planning a course, it can be helpful to survey drivers about what they see as their most urgent training needs.

Use the driver survey on the following page (as is, or adapted to your specific needs) to solicit driver input when planning a course.

Driver Training Needs Survey
“Transporting Children with Special Needs”

Please take a few minutes to complete the following survey. Your input will help us design effective training programs to help you do your important job.

1. Select **3 topics** listed below that you would **most like to receive current information** about:

- ☐ Background and history of transporting children with special needs.
- ☐ Characteristics of children with special needs and implications for their bus ride.
- ☐ Legal aspects of transporting children with special needs.
- ☐ Communication issues for drivers of children with special needs.
- ☐ Driver – aide teamwork.
- ☐ Behavior management strategies for children with special needs.
- ☐ Safe loading and securement of children using wheelchairs and other adaptive equipment.
- ☐ Preparing for emergencies.
- ☐ Other – describe:

2. List any **specific questions you have** about transporting children with special needs:

Return completed survey to the transportation office by _____. Thanks!

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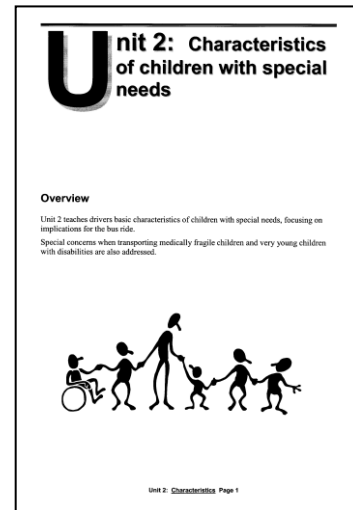
Using Lesson Plans

A separate Lesson Plan is provided for each unit of the course. (Lesson Plans follow this Course Guide in the Manual) Successful teachers understand that lesson plans are not meant as “paint by the numbers” verbatim scripts - they are only guides. Experienced trainers develop their own distinctive styles. Each trainer brings something different to a curriculum, and that’s as it should be. The Lesson Plans included in this Manual are intended as starting points for trainers to create their own specific plans.

All Lesson Plans in this curriculum utilize the following format:

Overview. Page one of each unit’s Lesson Plan is a brief description of the session (see sample Overview Page at right).

Framework. Page two of each Lesson Plan is a 4-part table summarizing the following components of the unit (see sample Framework Page below):



Overview Page

Unit 2 Framework			
Core Contents Outline 2.1. Unit 2 introduction 2.2. Attention deficit disorder 2.3. Autism 2.4. Hearing and visual impairments 2.5. Emotional disturbance 2.6. Mental retardation 2.7. Multiple disabilities 2.8. Specific learning disability 2.9. Speech or language impairment 2.10. Traumatic brain injury 2.11. Orthopedic impairment 2.12. Other health impairments 2.13. Medically fragile children 2.14. Infants and toddlers with special needs 2.15. Unit 2 review		Objectives By the conclusion of this unit, drivers will be able to: 1. Explain the importance of treating each disabled child as an individual 2. Describe the basic characteristics of each disability 3. Identify special challenges for the bus rider presented by each type of disability 4. Describe at least one strategy to safely transport each type of child	
Suggested Time 60 minutes		Preparation 1. Read Best Practice Backgrounders for each category of special needs child covered in this unit 2. Overhead projector, screen, and transparencies in place	

Framework Page

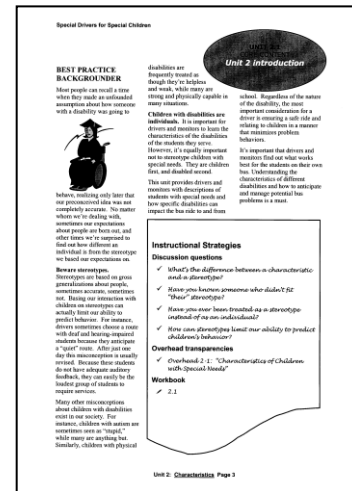
- Core Content – a simple outline of the main topics covered in the unit.
- Objectives – specific instructional goals for the unit – can be used to assess the effectiveness of the training at the conclusion of the unit.
- Suggested Time – a rough, “ball park” approximation of the minimum time required to cover the unit’s Core Contents.
- Preparation – tips and reminders to help the trainer prepare to teach the unit.

Core Content. A separate page is devoted to each Core Content (see sample Core Content Page below). Core Content pages are made up of three parts:

- Topic – identified in the gray oval at the top right corner of each page. Core Content topics are numbered sequentially by unit, e.g., 1.1, 1.2, 1.3; 2.1, 2.2, 2.3...
- Best Practice Backgrounder – to help bring the trainer up to date on the content being taught.

- Instructional Strategies – includes suggested Discussion Questions to utilize in any of a variety of discussion formats; a listing of Overhead Transparencies corresponding to the Core Content; identification of relevant Driver Workbook exercises; a list of any Optional Activities for the topic; and Additional Resources to help prepare the trainer.

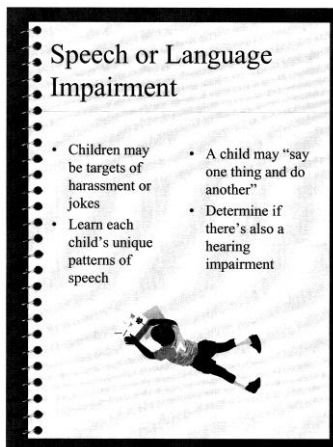
Note: Suggestions for introducing the unit, and for reviewing and closing it, are included as individual Core Contents in each Lesson Plan.



Core Content Page

Using Course Overheads

Overhead transparencies are included in the Manual after the 8 Lesson Plans (see sample Overhead Transparency below). Specific transparencies are referenced in the Instructional Strategy box on each Core Content page. Transparencies are numbered sequentially by unit (e.g., Unit 2.1, Unit 2.2, Unit 2.a, Unit 2.3b, etc.).



Overhead Transparency

Course transparencies primarily consist of bulleted lists. Text on the transparencies is not intended to be read verbatim but as a “kicking off point” for the trainer’s own comments about the topic.

Trainers who haven’t previously used overhead projectors should take the time to become familiar with them before class. Tips for effective overhead projector use include:

- Be familiar with your equipment.** Overhead projectors come in many different designs. Although they’re basically a simple technology, using unfamiliar overhead projectors can be surprisingly tricky. Save yourself embarrassment. Take the time to familiarize yourself with your equipment ahead of class.
- Acquire a good projector.** Unfortunately transportation departments often inherit audiovisual equipment schools have discarded. Old projectors in poor condition can be nearly useless – it may be difficult to focus or orient the image properly, and dirty or scratched glass can diminish the brightness, etc. If the equipment “at hand” is unsatisfactory, borrow a better projector from a school.
- Understand how projectors work.** On most overhead projectors, the light source is within the body of the machine, underneath the transparency. The projector “head,” mounted on a post or pole, has two functions - 1. Raising or

lowering it (usually with an adjustment knob) focuses the image. 2. Swiveling the head up or down) moves the image up or down. 3. To make the image larger or smaller you must move the projector itself away from, or closer to, the screen.

- **Adjust the projector properly.** The projected image should nearly fill (and just fit inside the edges of) the screen. Don't allow the image to extend beyond the screen – it's hard to read and looks careless. Check the projector adjustment before the program starts, and periodically during the program as well - the projector can be bumped accidentally. Get in the habit of checking the projected image each time you turn the overhead on.
- **Page orientation.** The projected image will be "right side up" on the screen if the transparency lying on the projector is "right side up" for the instructor facing the audience. "Portrait" orientation (vertical) transparencies usually fit entirely on the projector - "landscape" orientation (horizontal) transparencies usually won't fit entirely.
- **Direct the audience's attention to the image, not the equipment.** When an image is projected on the screen, a trainer should turn away from the projector and help the audience focus on the content on the screen.
- **Avoid keystoneing.** If the projector is positioned significantly lower than the screen, a "keystone effect" occurs. The image projected on the screen will not be square or rectangular but larger at the top than the bottom. This effect can be pronounced enough to make the projected image hard to read. Quality screens are equipped with an extension bar at the top of their adjustment rod that permits tilting the screen forward, eliminating the distortion.
- **Progressive disclosure.** To prevent your audience from becoming distracted by "reading ahead" on a projected transparency, lay a piece of heavy stock paper on the items you haven't covered yet. Move the paper bullet-by-bullet down the page as you proceed with the discussion.
- **Laser pointer.** An inexpensive laser pointer helps the instructor to point out key information projected on the screen.
- **Spare bulb.** Experienced trainers quickly learn the importance of having a "Plan B" to deal with equipment failures. A spare projector bulb, or better yet, a spare projector, is prudent.
- **Turn it off.** Don't leave the projector on when you're not using it – it can distract the class.

Using the Driver Workbook

All drivers in the class should be provided with their own copy of the Driver Workbook. (A master copy of the Driver Workbook is included in this Manual – see Table of Contents.)

The Driver Workbook follows the 8-unit structure of the course. Drivers should see it as a reference they can use after the course is completed.

The Workbook includes:

- **Questions** corresponding to each item of the Core Contents in each unit. The main purpose of the questions is as structured note taking by the drivers. As trainers move through the curriculum, drivers keep up in their workbooks, entering “answers” and their own notes as topics are covered. In many cases, the questions correspond directly with material presented on an overhead transparency. Questions can be used to stimulate class discussion. Trainers should be very familiar with the Driver Workbook and should have their own copies in front of them as they teach the course.
- **Key content** is summarized in the Driver Workbook for some of the topics covered.
- **Review questions.** Review questions drawn from the unit’s objectives are at the end of each unit in the Driver Workbook. They correspond to the Review overhead transparency for each unit. Review questions can be read aloud by trainers to assess how well drivers comprehended the material covered. Review questions can also be assigned as follow-up “homework” after a session, helping reinforce the material covered. It is also effective to use questions from the previous session as a review at the beginning of the next session. Review questions can also be utilized as a written quiz if trainers feel so inclined. The Final Review at the end of the course is primarily a compilation of each unit’s review questions, as a last chance to reinforce and clarify key contents.

Drivers should be told to bring something to write with to class, and trainers should have extra pens or pencils with them. Drivers should write their names on their copies of the Driver Workbook.

Trainers should maintain a sign-in sheet for every training session.



Discussion formats

The discussion questions listed in the “Instructional Strategies” sections in each Core Content can be used in a variety of ways, including:

- **Group discussion.** Trainer poses a question to the entire class and uses it to “kick off” discussion. The trainer’s role in this format is to encourage all drivers, not just the most knowledgeable or enthusiastic, to participate, and to ensure that the discussion stays on the topic.
- **Structured brainstorming.** Similar to above, but trainer logs key ideas onto a flipchart as drivers contribute them. A very effective group discussion format.
- **Small group exercise.** Class is broken up into small groups of 5-8 drivers each. Each small group first discusses a question and then briefly “reports back” to the whole class. Trainer serves as a discussion moderator.
- **Learning circle.** (for classes of 30 or less) Chairs are arranged in a circle; drivers address a question one at a time in sequence. Trainer facilitates the learning circle, keeping driver comments succinct – a one-minute maximum keeps the flow of the exercise going best. No interruptions or speaking out of sequence should be allowed. This format works well with complex questions and topics that draw on drivers’ personal experiences.

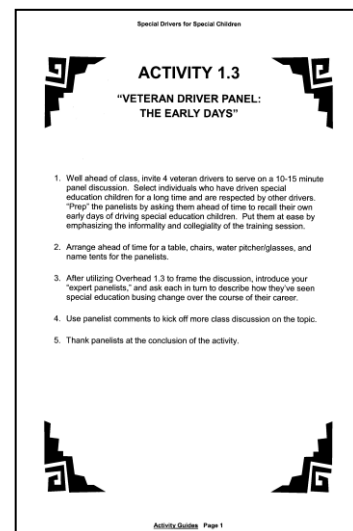
Questions in the Driver Workbook can also be used to stimulate class discussion in a variety of formats.

Facilitating productive discussions is an art. Skillful facilitation is an essential role of an expert trainer.

Using Activity Guides

Supplemental class Activities are included as one of the suggested Instructional Strategies for some topics (see sample Activity Guide at right).

Detailed instructions for carrying out an Activity are included in the separate Activity Guide section of this Manual. Activities are numbered to correspond to the appropriate Core Content, e.g. 1.3, 1.4, etc.



Activity Guide Page

Unique aspects of special needs driver training

Educating drivers about children with disabilities presents some unique challenges.

The importance of hands-on training

Even more than other types of driver training, special needs training requires “hands-on” training sessions. Technical safety procedures like wheelchair securement cannot be effectively taught in a lecture format. First of all, drivers need to “see it done right” in a close-up demonstration by a trainer who has genuine expertise in the technical skills required. Just as important, drivers need to practice the technique themselves.

The importance of monitoring and evaluating



Monitoring and evaluating driver practice of new safety techniques they’ve been taught is a critical aspect of special needs driver training. Unsupervised and unmonitored driver practice of a new technique can be counterproductive. Good trainers “watch like a hawk” while drivers try the new procedure out, correcting mistakes as they occur. Special needs transportation safety leaves little room for error. Even a “small” mistake could lead to a big problem.

The importance of updating procedures and information

No area of pupil transportation changes as quickly or constantly as special needs. Safety procedures continually evolve and new equipment regularly enters the industry.

This curriculum is designed to allow trainers to incorporate new ideas and information.

For a special needs trainer, staying abreast of current procedures, best practices, and equipment is almost a full time job in itself. Ideas for staying current include:

- **Reading.** Special needs trainers should be regular readers of school bus publications, especially those that cover special needs issues.
- **Conferences.** State and local conferences addressing special needs transportation safety are invaluable. Hearing about new ideas from fellow transportation professionals actively involved in day-to-day services to children with disabilities is a good way to stay current.
- **State Association.** The Virginia Association for Pupil Transportation is a resource for pupil transporters throughout the state. The Association can be reached at 757-441-5729.

- **Networking.** Historically, new ideas about pupil transportation safety have traveled by word of mouth, trainer to trainer. A trainer in your neighboring district may have an answer to a problem you're struggling with. Sharing ideas to improve children's safety is one of the unique aspects of the school bus community.
- **School staff.** Special needs administrators, teachers, psychologists, occupational or physical therapists, and nurses are invaluable sources of information about children with disabilities.
- **Special Needs Websites**

National Associations/Councils:

Council of Great City Schools (CGCS)
<http://www.cgcs.org/>

National Association for Pupil
Transportation (NAPT)
<http://www.napt.org/>

National Association of State Directors
of Pupil Transportation Services
(NASDPTS)
<http://www.nasdpts.org/>

National Association of State Directors
of Special Education (NASDSE)
<http://www.nasdse.org/>

National Safety Council (NSC)
<http://www.nsc.org/>

National School Boards Association
(NSBA)
<http://www.nsba.org/>

National School Transportation
Association (NSTA)
<http://www.schooltrans.org/>

Special Education:

National Information Center for
Children and Youth with Disabilities
(NICHCY)
<http://www.nichcy.org/index.html>

U.S. Department of Education
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/>

Office of Special Education and
Rehabilitative Services (OSERS)
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/index.html>

Office of Special Education Programs,
U.S. Department of Education (OSEP)
<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/SEP/index.html>

Special Education Publications:

A Guide to the Individualized Education
Program
http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/SEP/IEP_Guide/

Discipline Overheads (Free)
<http://www.nichcy.org/regohs/disc.pdf>

IDEA Topical Publications:

<http://www.ideapractices.org/idearegsma/TopicIndex.html>

The Individuals with Disabilities
Education Act Amendments of 1997
<http://www.dec-sped.org/IDEA/sldoo1.htm>

Transportation Trade Publications:

School Bus Fleet (SBF)
<http://www.schoolbusfleet.com>

School Transportation News (STN)
<http://www.stnonline.com>

(more)

Transporting Students with Disabilities
(TSD)

<http://www.fednewsonline.com>

Transportation with a Special Needs

Link:

AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

<http://www.aaafoundation.org/>

American Academy of Pediatrics

<http://www.aap.org/>

EDLAW Center, Inc.

<http://www.edlaw.net/top1f.html>

National Association of Governors'
Highway Safety Representatives

<http://www.naghsr.org/>

National Highway Traffic Safety
Administration (NHTSA)

<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>

Pupil Transportation Safety Institute
(PTSI)

<http://www.ptsi.org/>

Rehabilitation Engineering Research
Center on Wheeled Mobility

<http://www:rec.upmc.edu/>

U.S. Department of Transportation

<http://www.dot.gov/>

Facility considerations

Providing a professional learning environment

Bus drivers transporting children with disabilities have an important responsibility. It will never be a simple or easy job and it can't be accomplished safely unless drivers hold themselves to high professional standards. Holding a driver training program in an inadequate facility can undermine driver professionalism.

Trainers should do what they can to improve the learning environment. For instance, instead of holding the course in the tired and cluttered driver break room at the bus garage, a trainer should investigate the possibility of using school facilities such as a classroom or instructional center. Breaking away from their usual environment underscores the importance being placed on the course and can feel like “a breath of fresh air” to drivers.

What is a professional learning environment? Factors include:

- **Room.** Should be large enough for all students to sit comfortably, trainers to present effectively, and with adequate space for group activities and demonstrations.
- **Seating.** It's simple: comfortable chairs make a big difference to adult learners. Providing tables or desks for writing and taking notes is also necessary.
- **Visibility.** A good training facility has an open field of vision for everyone in the class – no posts or pillars to block someone's view, no distant corners from which AV is barely visible.
- **Lighting.** This course requires drivers to write in a workbook. Good lighting is a must.
- **Isolation from distractions.** Teaching is impossible when non-participants are intermittently walking to and fro through the “classroom.” Noise from machinery, students, traffic, school bells and P.A. systems, etc. can also create formidable distractions.
- **Temperature and ventilation.** Adult learners appreciate a basic comfort level – it's just human nature. Heating and air conditioning controls can be temperamental, and often the best advice to drivers is to dress in layers.

Instructional equipment needed for the course

- Overhead projector and screen

Special Drivers for Special Children

- Laser pointer (recommended)
- Flip chart, adequate paper, and bold markers
- Spare pencils and papers for participants
- Access to specially equipped buses with lift and wheelchair positions, wheelchairs, safety seats, seat belt cutters, seat belts, blindfold

Resources and References

The following supplemental resources and references will help trainers develop expertise in topics addressed in this curriculum. Note: some of these materials were developed several years ago and may not reflect current language concerns or the most current safety procedures, but can still be worthwhile as background materials. (Trainers should always exercise caution when using supplementary training materials in their programs.)

Unit 1: The challenge of transporting children with disabilities.

- Video: “Exceptional Times: An Historical Perspective of Special Education.” Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Introduction to the Special Needs Bus.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).

Unit 2: Characteristics of children with disabilities.

- Video: “Special Planning for Special People: Characteristics.” Minnesota Association for Pupil Transportation. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Transporting the Emotionally Disabled.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Transporting the Physically Disabled.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Transporting the “Hearing Disabled.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Transporting the “Mentally Disabled.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).

Special Drivers for Special Children

- Video: “Transporting the “Orthopedically Disabled.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Transporting the Student with ADD/ADHD.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Special Planning for Special People: Autism.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Special Planning for Special People: Characteristics.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Special Planning for Special People: Epilepsy.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Manual: A Practical Guide to Transporting Students with Disabilities. Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210) (Good detail on specific transportation challenges such as trachs, stomach tubes, shunts, etc.)
- Publication: See What I’m Saying: A School Bus Driver’s Guide to Transporting Deaf Children. A signing guide for school bus drivers. Chameleon Press. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- “Transporting Medically Fragile or Technology-Assisted Students.” Ray Turner. (White Buffalo Press, San Antonio, Texas).

Unit 3: Legal aspects of transporting children with disabilities.

- Book: “Transporting Students with Disabilities: A Manual.” James Rosenfeld and Linda Bluth. EDLAW.
- Book: “Special Needs Transportation Law: 1999 in Review.” Peggy Burns and Linda Bluth. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Transporting Students with Disabilities – Legal Issues.”

Unit 4: Communication is critical for special needs bus drivers.

- Video: “Confidential Records: Training for School Bus Drivers.” Peggy Burns. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).

Unit 5: Behavior management strategies for children with disabilities.

- Video Program: “Behavior Management: Transporting Students with Special Needs.” A three-video program from Strategies Training Systems (800-600-5636). “Transporting Special Needs Children with Commitment and Care,” “Kids are People Too,” and “Don’t Lose Your Touch.”

Unit 6: Safe loading and transportation of children using adaptive equipment.

- Video: “Loading and Unloading the Special Needs Bus.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “All Safe in Their Seats.” Available from Strategies Training Systems (800-600-5636) (Note: This video shows a driver riding the lift with a student – this is never recommended.)
- Video: “Wheelchair Management.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Lift use videos are available from lift manufacturers Ricon (800-322-2884) or Braun (800-843-5438).
- Securement system use videos are available from securement system manufacturers Kinedyne (785-841-4000) or Q’Straint (800-987-9987).
- Publication: “Guideline for the Safe Transportation of Pre-School Children in School Buses.” National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.
- Video: “Car Seats on School Buses.” Hunterdon Central/Flemington – Raritan Joint Transportation, New Jersey. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).

Unit 7: Special preparation for emergencies.

- Video: “Two Minutes or Less.” Monroe County BOCES. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Every Student I Have Ever Driven.” Monroe County BOCES. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “The Safest Way Out: Special Needs version.” AAA. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Evacuating the Special Needs Bus.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).

Unit 8: Unique responsibilities of drivers of children with disabilities.

- Video: “Common Sense: Insuring Your Personal Safety.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).
- Video: “Universal Precautions for the Special Needs Bus.” AMS. Available from Pupil Transportation Safety Institute (800-836-2210).